

Engagement and Understanding

Two Questions to Consider

- *What does understanding and engagement actually look like in our classrooms?*
- *Are students understanding (retaining and reapplying) and deeply engaged in what they read and learn?*

What are the differences between...

- Compliance
- Participation
- Motivation
- Engagement?

What does it mean to be engaged in learning?

- Engagement is born of *intellectual urgency* - engaged children often tell us through talk and action that they “have to know more...”. They are willing to put time and considerable effort into learning more. Often, the concepts and stories in which children are deeply engaged have conflict embedded. Children are intrigued by the conflict and may want to take action to mitigate a problem in their community or the world.
- Engagement is born of *emotional response to ideas* - engaged children can describe experiences when a concept is imprinted in the heart as well as the mind. They are certain that they will remember the ideas because a strong emotion is tied to a concept they’re learning.
- Engagement is deepened by *perspective bending* - engaged children are aware of how others’ knowledge, emotions and beliefs shape their own. They are willing to change their thinking and particularly relish the idea that their ideas can impact other learners.
- Engagement is, in some way, dependent on our *sense of the aesthetic* - engaged children are able to describe moments when they find something beautiful or extraordinary, hilarious or unusually meaningful. They may speak of a book or illustration that seems to have been created just for them.

Are students understanding (retaining and reapplying) and deeply engaged in what they read and learn?

Markers of understanding and engagement in narrative texts

1. Readers **experience empathy** - we sense that we are somehow *in the book*.

Empathy can include:

- **Character empathy** in which we feel we know the characters, experience the same emotions, stand by them in their trials
- **Setting empathy** in which we feel a part of the setting,
- **Conflict empathy** in which we experience the internal and external conflict as if first-hand

2. Readers **experience a memorable emotional response** - the sense that what the reader feels may be part of his/her emotional life for a long time, he/she may feel moved to take action to mitigate a conflict in the world

3. Readers **experience the aesthetic** - we find particular aspects of a book very compelling; we feel a desire to linger with or reread portions of the text we find beautiful, well-written, surprising, humorous or moving

4. Readers **ponder** - we feel a desire to pause and dwell in new facets and twists in the text - we may want to reread in order to think more about certain ideas

5. Readers find ourselves thinking about the book when we're not reading - we **generate new ideas and imagine new possibilities** in characters' lives; our ideas are original, but related to the text

6. Readers **advocate and evaluate** - we may follow one character or plot element more intensively and may have the sense of being "behind" the character(s) or narrator - we want events to evolve in a particular way

7. Readers **recognize patterns and symbols** - we may experience a moment of insight or begin to use our knowledge of literary tools to recognize themes, motifs as well as symbols and metaphors in stories

8. Readers **extrapolate** from details in the text - we arrive at **global conclusions from focal points** in the text - these conclusions may reach beyond the scope of the text to other people, events, settings -- we may feel an urge to take action to solve a problem or act on an issue in our community

9. Readers **evaluate the author's intentions, values and claims** - we actively study the author's style and may choose to replicate it in our writing; we are aware of how he/she manipulates our thinking with tools such as diction, foreshadowing and metaphor; we sometimes argue with the author; we discern and evaluate the author's success in making the book credible and we are attuned to ways in which he/she affirms or changes our **beliefs, values and opinions**.

10. Readers **remember** - we develop a sense of permanence that comes with deeply understanding something - we know that we'll be able to use a concept we understand in a new situation

Markers of understanding and engagement in content area learning and

informational texts

1. Learners **imagine themselves in real world situations, immersed in ideas**. We have compelling questions. We take on the role of scientist, social scientist, mathematician.

We:

- **begin to understand thought leadership** - we explore and seek to understand the lives of those who have made significant contributions to a field and begin to imagine how we might make contributions
- **understand the problems that led to discoveries and new solutions** in the scientific, technological or social scientific world - we have a sense of the elements that make a situation problematic and some sense of the steps to be taken to solve the problem

2. Learners **experience a memorable emotional response** - we feel a passion to learn more, compassion for others that may be affected by a problem and may be moved to take action to mitigate a conflict in the world

3. Learners **experience the aesthetic** - we feel a sense of wonder about the complexities and nuances related to a concept we are learning - we may feel compelled to reread portions and dig more deeply into the topic

4. Learners **revisit and rethink** - we choose to re-read or explore other texts in order to learn more about a concept - we feel that we want to review and rethink a concept

5. Learners **generate our own hypotheses and theories** about why and how things happen in the natural and social world; we check those hypotheses against those that have been tested

6. Learners **direct our energy to comprehending a few ideas of great import** - we develop a sense of what matters most, what is worth remembering, and have the confidence to focus on important ideas rather than details that are unimportant to the larger text - we **evaluate the information** and make decisions about credibility or bias in what we read

7. Learners **recognize patterns and text structures including**

- **cause/effect** - we use our background knowledge to discern how events affect each other
 - **comparisons and contrasts** - we develop a sense of how concepts are similar and different
 - **chronology** - we sense the general order of development or the progression of a series of ideas
- problem/solution** - when a problem is introduced, we begin to consider solutions and/or to anticipate solutions that may be presented in the text; we anticipate new problems and solutions related to earlier ones

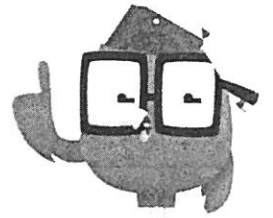
8. Learners **create schema** -- we realize how newly learned concepts "fit" into existing background knowledge, that we can make sense in relation to what is already known - that our existing knowledge is accurate or inaccurate (and needs to be revised) - we look to a variety of sources to complete schema when we recognize that it is missing









9. Learners **recognize the influence of beliefs/values/opinions** - we may experience a sense of affirmation of existing beliefs/values/opinions and/or sense newly developing beliefs/values/opinions related to the text - we can give evidence to support them

10. Learners **remember** - we develop a sense of permanence that comes with deeply understanding something - we know that we'll be able to use a concept they understand in a new situation

Making Thinking Visible

Thinking Moves



-  Observing closely and describing what's there
-  Building explanations and interpretations.
-  Reasoning with evidence
-  Making connections
-  Considering different viewpoints and perspectives.
-  Capturing the heart and forming conclusions
-  Wondering and asking questions
-  Uncovering complexity and going below the surface of things



Writing Center

Students write for a variety of purposes.

Ideas for the writing center/station:

Reader's Response: If you do not want your students to respond to text during independent reading, then they can do it during the Writing Center time.

Procedural Writing: Students write letters, notes, lists, ads, etc.

Picture Prompts: (*Materials: basket/box/container, coloring book, crayons, pencils, different types of writing paper, construction paper*) Buy a coloring book that contains pictures and no words. Students choose a picture, rip it out, and write a story based on that page. Once they have completed their story and have colored their picture, they can mount both pieces of work onto a folded construction paper to give it the look of a "book". Teachers can laminate each completed work and create a class book (once the whole class has had a chance to create a story) to be put in the library.

Writing Packets: Make a list of words based on a topic, such as baseball, Christmas, homework, etc. Staple that list on the front of a large, clasp envelope. Add paper and pencils inside the envelope. Place packets in a basket. Students choose a topic and write a story using the words listed. *Busy Teacher's Cafe now has these writing packets for you to download! Click [here](#) for more information!*

Poetry Prompt: Similar to a picture prompt. Find poems for students to read. Students then write about any connections they have made to the poem. Or, create prompts (questions) to go with each poem for them to respond to.

Paragraph Order: Copy the sentences of a paragraph on individual sentence strips and place them in an envelope. On the envelope, write directions that explain how to do the activity. The goal of this activity is for students to learn how to put sentences in order to form a paragraph.

Genre Writing: Student write in different genres (biography, persuasive, fictional, etc.)

Journals: Students can write entries in their journals. Take a look at our monthly journal calendars!

Story Starters: Story starters for writing short stories.



Independent Reading Center

Students choose books on their independent reading level and can complete a some form of a reader response.

Many teachers have their students keep a reader's response notebook to record their responses. The independent reading center takes place in and around the classroom library. It is important for teachers to teach mini-lessons on choosing the right books. Also, teachers should administer running records periodically to learn each student's independent and instructional reading level.

Some ideas for independent reading center/station:

Reading Log: Students keep track of the books they read by filling out their reading log.

Task/Discussion Cards: Students choose a task/discussion card to respond to, either in writing or orally with another partner.

Graphic Organizers: These sheets help students organize their thinking.

Book Report: Various book reports can be used, from simple to more complex. Great way to track kids' understanding of text.

Comprehension Strategies: Connections, questioning, inferring, synthesizing, visualization

Literary Elements: Students can practice identifying characters, plot, setting, theme, etc.

Author /Genre Studies: Students can read books on a particular author or genre.

Reading Buddies: Students read in pairs. Also, student can use stuffed animals as reading partners. Students choose a "partner" to whom they can read to. This is particularly effective for shy or insecure students. This activity has been proven to help children develop their reading fluency.

Book Reviews: Display "Books of the Month" or "Books of the Week" which all students are required to read. Students then use a form to write a summary and a review of the book(s) they have completed. The reviews can be discussed among the class (when all students have completed their reviews) and the class can make a graph on likes, dislikes, favorite book, favorite character, etc.

Recommendation Chart: Create a chart to post in the reading center. Have students recommend books they have read by writing the title and author.

Weekly Reader/Scholastic News Center: Does your class receive Weekly Readers, Scholastic News, or any other magazine? What do you do with the extras? You can create a center with the extra magazines. Place 1 or 2 issues in a container. Create questions or activities for each issue for students to work on.

Questions: Students can generate questions about the text they read.

Write a Letter: Students write a letter to a buddy or the teacher about the text they've read.



Poetry Center

The poetry center exposes children to the genre of poetry. In this center, students are able to practice reading with fluency as well as write poems of their own. Students can create a poetry notebook or use their reader's response notebook to complete some of the following activities:

Ideas for poetry center/stations:

- Copy a poem from a chart or a poetry book.
- Illustrate a poem.
- Complete a poetry prompt.
- Highlight interesting words.
- Read a poem with a buddy.
- Fill in a poem with missing words (Poem Cloze).
- Substitute words in a poem.
- Record a poem on tape.
- Create a poem using magnetic poem kit.
- Find patterns in a poem.
- Memorize and/or perform a poem.
- Author study on poets.
- Compare two poems using a venn diagram.
- Complete poetry task cards.
- Build a poem from sentence strips on a pocket chart.

<p>Poetry Chart (Placed in their notebooks to sign off after doing buddy reading).</p>	<p>Poetry Task Cards</p>	<p>Poetry Bookmarks</p>	
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More Sites and Resources			
<u>Poetry Ideas</u>	<u>Poetry for Children</u>	<u>Giggle Poetry</u>	<u>Scholastic Poetry</u>
<u>Different Types of Poems</u>	<u>Magnetic Poetry Kit Online</u>	<u>Can Teach Songs & Poems</u>	<u>Poetry 4 Kids</u>



Technology Center

Ideas for computer center/station:

Write a book review: Students can go to different sites and write book reviews for kids.

- www.amazon.com
- www.alanbrown.com
- www.spaghetlibookclub.org

Read about authors and illustrators: Many sites are dedicated to children's authors and illustrators. Take a look at this comprehensive listing - <http://www.ucalgary.ca/~dkbrown/authors.html>

Read books online: There are great books online that are interactive or contain audio clips.

Create a Story: Write a story on MS Word or other software, such as Kidpix.

Research: Do research using sites like www.yahooligans.com.

Webquests: Webquests are great activities and the Internet is filled with many webquests of varying topics and themes. You can do a search on Google on particular webquests.

Language Arts/Literacy Activities: There are wonderful sites out there that have online games and activities based on phonics, grammar, writing, and more. Some have been listed below. [Scholastic](#) is one of my favorites!!

Online Literacy Activities	Online Literacy Activities in Spanish	Suggestions for Online Activities (Search by subject and grade)	Clifford the Big Red Dog
Little Animals Activity Center	Magic Schoolbus	Kids Domain	Webquest Search Page
Webquest Links	More Webquest Links	Children's Storybooks	International Children's Digital Library (Books in various languages)
Starfall.com			